

[00:00:00.250] - Melissa Corkum

No parent really enjoys a tantrum. Actually, our kids don't really enjoy them either. It never feels good to have such big feelings that we can't control that come out and crying, kicking, stomping, throwing, hitting, yelling. Our kids don't want to be doing that either. So now would be a good time for me to just note that there are levels of tantrums and dysregulation.

[00:00:22.510] - Melissa Corkum

So sometimes our kids are so out of control that they need to just kind of burn out that high level of dysregulation and high energy. And the best thing we can do in those situations is just keep everyone safe. But sometimes the tantrum is closer to kind of agitation, mixed with some high bursts of energy and grumpiness. Ultimately, it would be best to avoid getting to the tantrum phase. But let's be real. These things happen, right? So once our children start to escalate, what we want to do is introduce a pattern interrupt to help them reengage their thinking brain. This is really an effective way to stop a tantrum. And a pattern interrupt is something that is designed to break your focus or commitment to something, like throwing a tantrum. So, over the years, we have gathered a pretty hefty bag of tricks. It's important to have multiple options up your sleeve because there's a good chance that a trick will work once in a while, but probably never twice in a row. I know. It stinks, doesn't it? So we also don't want to create a battleground trying to get our kid to do this magic thing that's going to help stop their tantrum. Sometimes we get so desperate that we're like, just do the thing. She said it would stop the tantrum, but we're really kind of counteracting any sense of calm regulation that we could get to.

[00:01:49.560] - Melissa Corkum

So if we have multiple tricks up our sleeve, then normally we can find something that will work for our child. A lot of times, I can get my child to do something that I want him to do when he's feeling oppositional by daring him that he can't. It's kind of an old trick, but it does work. Thanks. Reverse psychology, right? Sometimes I'll do it or I'll do something that's obviously incorrect and that causes my child to insist that he can show me the right way to do it, which, of course, I always agree to, right? Begrudgingly. So even if your child won't do any of these things, honestly, just do them for yourself, because they'll keep you from throwing your own tantrum.

[00:02:32.810] - Melissa Corkum

So, number one, get upside down. Changing our orientation in space activates our body's vestibular system. The vestibular system is our sense of feeling. It's a sensory system that tells us where our body is in space, and hanging upside down calms the nervous system. So you can dare your kids to see how long they can do a handstand against the wall. One of our kids wants to hang upside down on the monkey bars. And sometimes our kids will naturally find this upside down inversion space by just like, wallowing on the sofa and then hanging their head off upside down.

[00:03:09.590] - Melissa Corkum

Number two, anything that gets our kids counting, right? Counting engages our thinking brain, our upstairs brain, our logic brain, whatever you want to call it. And this is the part of the brain that keeps the feelings brain in check, the one that's throwing things, hitting, screaming. So obviously your kids aren't going to just start counting on demand. You have to be a little trickier than that. But one of our most successful counting interventions happened when a child of ours threatened to run away. And we kind of leaned into it and offered to help her count her piggy bank because we were sure if she was going to run away that she was going to need some money. She agreed and so we went into a room, found her bank and started to count all the money in it. So you can't count without engaging your thinking brain. So by the time we counted out all the coins, she was way more regulated and regulated enough to use her words to talk about what was frustrating her. So one, get upside down, two, count.

[00:04:08.850] - Melissa Corkum

Three, read or write. This is kind of in the same vein as counting. These are activities that involve our thinking brain. So when your kids are angry or complaining, maybe invite them to write all the things that are wrong. Invite them to get it all out on paper, right? So it's going to be really hard for them, writing is one of the highest things that our brain ever does, so it's going to be hard for them to write without kind of doing some self regulation beforehand.

[00:04:34.340] - Melissa Corkum

Number four, invite them to tell a story. Organizing a story is another way to help our kids engage the thinking brain. Sometimes I'll say things like, so tell me the story of what made you so upset. Or tell me the story of what you wish was happening, or how you wish it had turned out, or how you wish I would handle it, or something like that. And they'll start thinking and they'll start using a lot of words. But they're not words that are yelling at you, right? They're a little bit more constructive. So number one, get upside down. Two count. Three, read or write. Four, tell a story.

[00:05:05.270] - Melissa Corkum

Five, get a little crazy. So if you can't beat the crazy, join the crazy, right? Do something unexpected that surprises your child. I don't know if I'm supposed to tell you this, but my husband has been known to walk around our house in high heels. I think once he put on this fashion show for our daughter when she was really angry at him and she couldn't help but laugh. God bless him, right? So we do crazy things, but anything to distract your child is good. We've also been known to personify something like a hand and start talking to it about the situation, you know, hey, and it seems Bobby is really upset about so and so. Or once we even personified one of our kids hands. So this particular kid had, I think, hit someone and was getting dysregulated as we were trying to deal with it because, of course, it was not that child's fault, right? It's never their fault. And so I think she said something ridiculous, it's not my fault. And I came out with like, oh, well, then let me talk to your hand. Not like, talk to your hand, but like, I actually got her hand out, the one that was the culprit of the hitting. And I took her hand and I looked at it and I said, now, hand, we are not going to hit anymore. And I kind of gave my little lecture about hitting to her hand, and she laughed a little bit, but also it helped her receive all the words. She was still hearing them with her ears, but it kind of removed some of the shame and the things that kind of triggered her.

[00:06:34.420] - Melissa Corkum

In a recent Adoption Connection podcast (you can look for the Adoption Connection podcast at theadoptionconnection.com, I will also put a link to this particular episode in the description of the video), but Robyn Gobbel talks about matching our kids energy and arousal levels. So when our kids are starting to act high energy, but in a dysregulated way, if we match their high energy and they're kind of crazy, but in a regulated way, where we're on purpose kind of getting a little bit crazy, then our nervous systems are getting closer together, and then our nervous systems want to mirror each other. So if we kind of get up to their energy level but we're regulated, then their nervous system can latch onto our nervous system and we can help bring them back down to a more regulated state. So, one, get upside down. Two, count. Three, read or write. Those are all things that engage the brain, the thinking brain. Four, tell a story. Five, get crazy.

[00:07:31.960] - Melissa Corkum

Six, toss a ball. A soft ball, a really soft ball, maybe a balloon or a cotton ball. But also, according to Robyn, in the podcast where we interviewed her, she shared that we have a reflex that causes us to return an object that's tossed into our field of vision. So we'll catch it, we'll throw it back. And so this is a way that we can initiate this back and forth game of catch that's rhythmic and repetitive and regulating, right? But like I said, just remember to toss something that if they wing it back at you, it's not going to hurt.

[00:08:00.530] - Melissa Corkum

Number seven, eat something cold. Any extreme temperature in our mouth acts as a pattern interrupt. This is something that, again, that pattern interrupt designed to break our concentration on whatever we're trying to concentrate on, like, throwing a tantrum. So sucking a cold, thick, smoothie thrust straw is a great way to pattern interrupt while also calming the nervous system, because sucking can be really calming to the nervous system.

[00:08:22.710] - Melissa Corkum

Number eight smell an essential oil. My favorite, right? Our sense of smell is the only one of our five senses that bypasses our thinking brain and directly affects our mission center. So inhaling an essential oil can immediately shift someone's mood. It literally changes our brain chemistry. Let your

child choose the scent that he's drawn to. Just the act of picking his own scent gives some sense of control, and that could be regulating.

[00:08:47.770] - Melissa Corkum

Number nine laugh. We all know laughter is great for our soul. It's a good distractor. Try putting on pulling your phone up and pulling up just an irresistibly funny YouTube video. Chances are he'll get curious about what you're watching, and then you can start walking together. Even if he doesn't, it's good for your soul, right? And you need to fill your bucket up first while you're living through said tantrum.

[00:09:10.910] - Melissa Corkum

Lastly, mirroring. So this is a technique that Chris Voss talks about in his book, *Never Split the Difference*. He was at one point in time the nation's number one FBI negotiator. He filled that role for many years, and he wrote a book about his experience. And so it wasn't meant to be a parenting book, but one of the best parenting books I've ever actually read, and it's super guy friendly.

[00:09:34.160] - Melissa Corkum

So if you're looking for a book that your husband can latch onto that doesn't feel as like, ishy-gooshy connected in feelings like, this is a great book by Chris Voss. And he says, get on your best late night DJ voice and just repeat the last three words that your child yelled at you and ask it as a question. So say they're saying you're the worst mom ever, and you can be like, worst mom ever? And then just wait. And a lot of times they'll continue to verbalize, and a lot of times through that verbalization, every time they kind of pause, you do the same thing. Repeat the last three words kind of as a question. They'll keep talking, and sometimes you can get to the bottom of what they're angry about. Because they're really kind of never angry about the thing that set them off, right? There's always some kind of underlying thing.

[00:10:18.910] - Melissa Corkum

So those are ten of my kind of unusual, weird ways to interrupt a tantrum. So just to review, get upside down, count, read or write, tell a story, get crazy, toss a ball or something super super soft, eat something extremely cold preferably through a straw, smelling essential oil, laugh or practice mirroring. So I hope that's helpful to you guys.